

Bedtime

18-minute Mini playsheet

If you have trouble in the sleep department you are not alone. The high-paced, busy-busy lifestyle people live, combined with the information overload we endure daily due to things like the Internet and Social Media, it's no surprise that our mind can't switch off. In order to turn the mind off so we can enjoy bodily rest, we need to take away the mind stimulation and enjoy bedtime rituals and practices that calm both the mind and body. And this is what this **Bedtime Mini** is for!

But before I talk too much about this sequence, if you're serious about curing insomnia, enjoying a restful sleep that leaves you feeling refreshed upon waking, then there's a few other lifestyle habits that will need to be looked at as well, so your mind and body are free to drift off into a restful slumber when you roll into bed of an evening...

- ♥ Make sure you don't watch television, surf the Internet or exercise (yoga excepted) at least 1 hour before going to bed
- ♥ Decide on a bedtime and stick to it. You want to aim to stick to your same bedtime a least 6 nights a week so your body can get into a rhythm
- ♥ Between 10pm and 12midnight is when the body does its healing, so aim to be asleep by 10pm to capitalise on this
- ♥ Have a cup of chamomile tea half an hour before bed (this helps calm the body and prepare it for sleep)
- ♥ Don't eat any body stimulating foods before bedtime le. caffeine (including coffee and chocolate), cheese, alcohol and high sugar foods. Aim not to have a coffee after midday
- ♥ Do eat foods that help calm the nervous system such as: turkey, bananas, almond butter or yoghurt, but not less than two hours before bed
- ♥ Resolve any arguments or grievances before trying to go to sleep
- ♥ Put lavender essential oil on your pillow to help calm your nervous system and help you sleep
- ♥ Prioritise sleep and ensure you allow at least 7-8 hours per night

Waking up in the middle of the night, or can't get to sleep to begin with? Try this **Sleep Writing** exercise....

Keep a notepad next to your bed, and when you find you can't sleep, get it out and start writing. Write whatever is on your mind, and don't stop until you have nothing left to write. Imagine you're taking out the garbage, and the garbage is all the thoughts that are bouncing round your mind. Whatever you write down doesn't have to make any sense. It's simply a mind-dump.

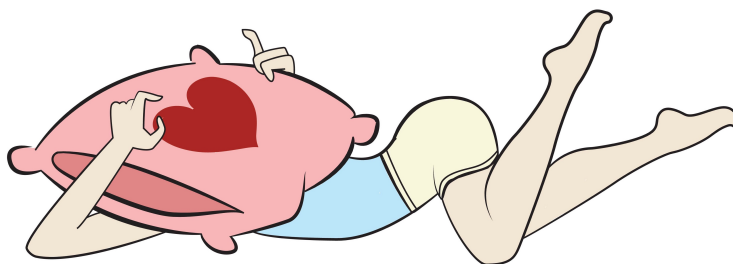
Part of the reason for us not being able to sleep, is because we have so much on our mind. We finally lay down, after a busy busy day, and our mind wants to start processing things. This is why having time out during your day to simply sit and 'be' (yes, that means doing absolutely nothing) will help calm a busy mind at night, so it doesn't need to use precious sleep time to do its daily processing.

Ok, now that we've had a look at some of the key issues that promote an inability to sleep, lets talk yoga! Many people spend so much money on medications and sleeping aids, when the safer more natural way of helping entice the body into a restful slumber, is to give the body what it *really* needs, yoga and meditation. This **Bedtime Mini** sequence is designed to help induce you into a restorative

sleep that leaves you feeling well rested and alert the following day. If practised before bed each night, this sequence will help you find relief from a whole range of sleeping disorders.

When you do this sequence you're telling the body that it's time for sleep. You're inviting the body into a space where it can easily let go of the over-active mind, and move into a place of stillness. Into a place of restoration. Often people are busy busy right up until the minute they roll into bed. This doesn't give the body a chance to wind down. Then we spend the next few hours tossing and turning, because there's things on our mind, there's no way we can sleep. The mind is still alive and active.

We need to take some time before bed, to let the mind know it's time to sleep. This is why I recommend spending the hour before your bedtime, cooling down for the day. That means no TV (as this keeps the brain active), instead spend the time meditating, doing yoga, listening to soft instrumental music, having a bath or a cup of chamomile tea. Use this pre-bedtime yoga sequence It'll give you a little practice that, when done regularly, helps train the brain to know 'Oh it's that time of night, where we prepare for sleep'.



How does yoga before bed work? When you slow down and stay in a pose, using the breath to tune into the body, the tension of the day begins to gently let go, so that anything you've been holding into - mentally or physically - can release. Stresses, worries, feelings of overwhelm; they all start to unwind and let go. Stretching - when married with conscious breath - has a profound calming effect on the body, by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which counteracts stress.

Now I know we all have things to do. Commitments to keep and so forth. But just consider this: Studies show that people with insomnia are much more likely to experience associated health problems such as anxiety, depression, diabetes and congestive heart failure. Not only that, if we don't get enough sleep - that's 7-8 hours per night - our body ages far more quickly!

YOUR BEDTIME MINI

Make this your bedtime ritual.

In preparation for your **Bedtime Mini**, hop into the most comfy thing you own or even your Pjs or nightie, make sure your teeth are brushed and all chores completed, so you can roll on into bed as soon as you finish. Dim the lights, perhaps do your yoga sequence to the light of a lamp or candle, and once you become familiar with the poses, left your gaze be soft or simply close your eyes completely as you move through each calming pose.

Above all else, practise being kind to yourself. This beautiful bedtime yoga flow sequence is calming, soft and gentle so that you may enjoy a deeper and sweeter sleep. Practise moving in a way that feels gentle and kind for your mind and body. If you want to be healthy, it really does begin with identifying ways you can be kinder and more gentle with yourself. Let the breath take you into stillness. A good night's sleep really is within your reach. All you need to do, is apply my above pointers and commit to a bedtime yoga practice like this.

Bedtime

18-minute Mini manual

- ♥ Easy Pose: 1-min
 - ♥ Alternate Nostril Breathing: 2-min
 - ♥ Side-Body Stretch: 90-sec
 - ♥ Bridge Pose: 2-min
 - ♥ Life Nerve Stretch: 90-sec
 - ♥ Foot Massage: 1-min
 - ♥ Butterfly: 90-sec
 - ♥ Goddess Pose: 2-min
 - ♥ Happy Baby: 2-min
 - ♥ Windshield Wiper Leg Stretch: 90-sec
 - ♥ Sleeping Beauty: 90-sec
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Alternate Nostril Breathing

in Easy Pose

Sitting in **Easy Pose**, move the fleshy bits of your booty out of the way so your sit bones can root down into the earth. Feel your spine tall and shoulders relaxed. We begin by setting an intention for our practice fore moving into **Alternate Nostril Breathing**. To begin, rest your left hand on your left knee, and let your heart be open. Bring your right hand in front of your face and drop your middle finger, ring finger and pinkie down towards your palm. Use your right thumb to seal up your right nostril.



Inhale slowly through your left nostril until you reach a full inhalation, pause as you close your left nostril with your right index finger and remove your thumb to open your right nostril. Exhale through your right nostril until you are empty of air. Inhale through your right nostril. At the full inhalation, pause as you switch from your index finger back to your thumb so your left nostril is open and the right nostril closed, and exhale through your left nostril.

Continue this breathing sequence: Slowly inhaling left, exhaling right, inhaling right, exhaling left, and so on for **2-minutes**. Remember to consciously take slow deep breathes throughout, keeping your breath smooth without straining. This can sometimes feel a little like yoga for the brain, so just remember, every time you fill up with breath, you switch nostrils.

OTHER WAYS: If you have any nasal congestion or other sinus related issues practise long deep breathing instead. If you cannot sit comfortably in **Easy Pose**, simply pop a cushion under your booty, sit in **Rock Pose** (kneeling) or sit on a chair, feet flat on the floor. Whichever pose you choose, just ensure your spine is tall and you can feel your sit bones rooting down and well supported.

GIFTS: Our nose is directly linked to our brain and nervous system and is exceptionally clever! By simply practising a couple minutes of **Alternate Nostril Breathing** you can restore imbalances in your brain, improve sleep, boost your thinking and calm your nervous and glandular systems. How's that for a healing tonic!

Breathing in through your left nostril accesses the right 'feeling' hemisphere of your brain, helping to calm you while integrating unwanted negative emotions and stress. It's cooling, relaxing and associated with lunar energy. **Just breathing in and out of the left nostril is a powerful antidote for sleep, and something I suggest to do for 5 or so minutes, if you find yourself in bed unable to sleep at night.**

Breathing in through the right nostril accesses the left 'thinking' hemisphere of the brain giving you clarity and putting you in a positive mood. It's warming, energising, projective and associated with solar energy. Consciously alternating your breath between either nostril will activate your whole brain creating a deep sense of wellbeing and harmony on the physical, mental and emotional levels. The ancient yogis believed that if you could regulate breath, then you could control your mind.

Side-Body Stretch in Easy Pose

We begin in **Easy Pose**, with the palms resting on the floor either side of the body. Making sure your sit bones are rooting down into the ground, feel a nice lift through your heart and crown. Turn your right palm up, and as you exhale let your right fingers draw a line up and over into a nice **Side-Body Stretch**, your left hand acting as a firm support, pressing into the mat. As you arrive lengthen your side body and slightly roll your ribs to the sky as you open and extend. The shape here should see the right side of your body and right arm forming an arc.

Make sure your shoulders aren't creeping up to your ears here, draw them down to keep the stretch about the side-body. Keep pressing down through the left palm, so you don't collapse through the torso. Heart softly pressing forward, gently turn your gaze up toward the moon. Close your eyes, soften into the sensations, and find a little movement here, feeling your way into the stretch, keeping your neck long as your right hip-point anchors down into the earth.

Spend **30-seconds** taking a few breathes here, really filling up the side-body, expanding the rib cage as if it were an accordion. On an inhale slowly think up and over as your hand makes its slow journey back down to the earth. Then on and exhale take it to the other side, and do the same here for a further **30-seconds**.



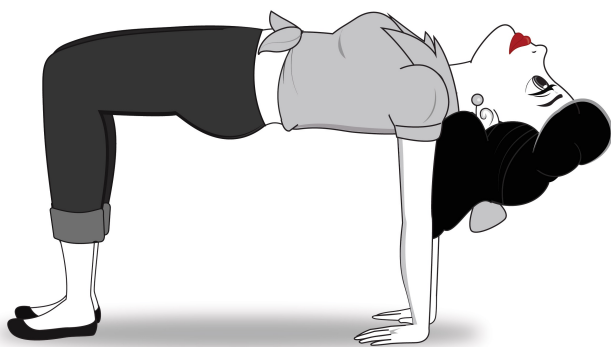
OTHER WAYS: If **Easy Pose** is difficult for you, either prop your booty up with a cushion, or do the **Side-Body Stretch** in **Rock Pose** or sitting on a chair with your feet planted firmly into the floor. If you're taking the chair option, you'll need to hold the side of your chair for support, as opposed to placing your palm flat on the floor.

GIFTS: Just as we flex the spine back and forth through many of the postures in yoga, so too do we need to stretch it to the sides. Side bends are the most efficient ways to stretch some of the major muscles of the sides and back, such as the latissimus dorsi (broad back muscles) and the quadratus lumborum, which will leave your lower back feeling more comfy and flexible. You're also increasing your range of motion here and giving the diaphragm a nice stretch so you can breathe better.

Side stretches are also really good to help us even out sides of the body that get more action during our day, for example, driving or holding a phone in just one hand. The side body can get really tight, especially when we sleep, and they can affect us in all sorts of ways. This pose goes a long way in helping to iron out that tension and free us up for a more sound sleep, and more sound functioning overall.

Bridge Pose

Sitting on your booty have your feet out in front of you hip-width apart, soles of the feet flat on the floor, knees pointing to the sky. Place your palms flush on the floor next to your booty or a fraction further back, shoulder-width apart. You can turn your fingers facing towards the body or away (for a more powerful pose); just make sure your shoulders are comfy with the option you choose. Chin tucked in a touch, gaze towards the navel, on the inhale press into all ten knuckles, engage your core and lift your booty up until there's a straight line from your knees to your collarbone so your body is parallel with the floor; you want your thighs and spine in one line.



Then you have two options here. You can hold here, engaging the abdominal wall taking long slow deep breaths, or you can exhale down, inhale up, exhale down, inhale up, and continue for **2-minutes**, moving with soft grace as you stay strong in the core throughout. Whichever option you choose, make sure you keep your arms and calves at right angles with the floor when you come up into the **Bridge**. To come out to the pose, simply use an exhale to float on down.

OTHER WAYS: **Bridge Pose** is a strong pose, and if you don't have a lot of back strength to begin with you will need to build up to this one. In this case, simply press up from the floor as far as you can lift, hold for as long as you can, then lower down, and repeat. Gently work your way up into this pose, gradually building strength. If this is simply too much, then you have the option of doing **Pelvic Lifts** (found in the **Blissful Breath sequences**) instead.

GIFTS: **Bridge Pose** is brilliant for helping strengthen the back, helps stretch the lower back and alleviate lower back pain. At the same time you're also strengthening the wrists, arms, legs and

shoulders and keeping the spine active too. It's good for the immune, digestive and reproductive systems while calming the nervous system - releasing anxiety and tension in the body - for a restful night's sleep. **Bridge Pose** is simply another version of the **Reverse Plank** pose found in the **Luscious Lady Parts** sequence.

Life Nerve Stretch

Moving straight from **Bridge** pose take your hands through the centre of your legs to take hold of your big toes, or the soles of your feet. Feeling your sit bones plugging into the earth, inhale your crown tall, then exhale pressing the backs of your knees down into the floor into **Life Nerve Stretch**, keeping your knees as bent as you need to stay long through your spine, feet flexed, legs together, feel your heart reaching forward. Imagine your feet are pushing up against a wall!

Looking forward, smile, then on an exhale, let your back round over, tummy snuggling into your thighs as your head releases fully. Feel the lovely stretch up the back of your legs - though your hamstrings - as you take long deep, *calming* breaths here. If you need more of a stretch, strengthen your legs a little further. **Please note: We enter the **Life Nerve Stretch** a little differently to how you learnt it in the **Letting Go 60-min** sequence.*

Hold this pose for **90-seconds** as you take slow deep breaths. To come out of the pose, tuck your chin into your chest, press forward into your heels, and on an inhale, gently release your feet as you slowly roll up through the staircase of your spine.

OTHER WAYS: If your hamstrings are tight straight legs will be near impossible, so simply bend them as generously as you need. As long as you feel the stretch up the back of your legs, you're getting all the yummy nutrients. You can also put a blanket under your booty to help raise your hips and ease the pose.

GIFTS: The **Life Nerve Stretch** will help stretch out your life! When you stretch the back of your legs, you're stretching your Life Nerves - the large nerves in your legs that connect with your parasympathetic nervous system that helps you regain harmony in stressful situations, hence why you feel more emotionally balanced. You can do this pose alone for just three minutes before bed for a more restful sleep! If you choose to press into your big toes as you hold this pose, you are also stimulating the pituitary gland, which is responsible for secreting special hormones into the body that support our sleep.



Foot Massage

Sitting in **Butterfly** pose (see below), ensure your sit bones are rooting down while your crown is drawing your spine up to the heavens, creating length through the spine. In this active pose, use your hands to

begin to massage your feet as you feel drawn for **1-minute**. You can massage the arches of your feet, the heel, the toes, etc. Go where you feel needs your most attention during any given practice. If you have a little reflexology learnings under your belt, feel free to play with areas you're familiar with too.

GIFTS: Massaging the feet before bed - especially spending a good 15-30 minutes - has been shown to significantly increase a person's ability to fall into a deep and nourishing sleep. There are so many reflexology points in the feet - all 72 nerves in the body have endings in the feet - so as you massage your feet you're giving your whole body a nice healing, while at the same time, calming your nervous system.

Due to unhealthy lifestyles and spending all day on our feet, when one of our internal organs goes out of balance it creates calcium and acid deposits in that area of the sole. We can use foot massage to help breakup these deposits and thus, help restore our whole body to its natural state of health and balance, simply through giving our feet a little love.

Butterfly

Staying in **Butterfly** pose check in to make sure your sit bones are still glued to the ground and your spine is tall. The soles of your feet should be touching from toes to heels, and sitting in front of your groin (as close to your groin as is comfortable).

Interlace your hands around your feet, breathe your spine a little taller, and on the exhale, bend forward from the hips, letting your heart lead your torso forward, only as far as you can keep a straight spine, and can feel a stretch in your groin. Take a couple of breaths here, then invite your back to round over, relaxing the weight of your head down.



Rest here for **90-seconds**, taking long slow deep breaths all the way down to your pelvic floor. When you're ready to leave this pose, press into your soles, press into the outer edges of your feet, and roll up one vertebra at a time, gently making your way up to your starting position. **Please note: This version of the **Butterfly** does not use the 'flutter' of the knees as we do in the Luscious Lady Parts sequences.*

OTHER WAYS: If you have a groin or knee injury, simply pop a blanket under your outer thighs for support. If you have sciatica, either avoid this pose, or sit on a cushion to raise your hips higher.

GIFTS: This pose improves flexibility in your lady parts and hip region, as it stretches the inner thighs, genitals and knees and strengthens the pelvic floor. It's also a really nice stretch for the lower back without requiring loose hamstrings. **Butterfly** helps release toxins and negative energy in the areas of the hip and groin. Your pelvis, abdomen and back get stimulated by a plentiful blood supply making it great for sexual health complaints. But the reason it's in this **Bedtime sequence** is because **Butterfly**

helps create an overall sense of ease in the body, calms the mind and helps dissolve fatigue from long hours of standing and walking.

Goddess Pose

We move from **Butterfly** straight into **Goddess Pose** in this sequence, by swimming the hands behind the body and leaning back onto the forearms, gently coming all the way down to the floor until you arrive in **Goddess Pose**. Soles of the feet will be touching, legs open wide like a diamond, letting gravity invite the full weight of the legs to softly surrender into the earth. Snuggle your shoulders under your heart space, so you feel your chest wide open. Place your hands on your belly, and breathe deep.



In this pose we simply breathe and let go, allowing the body to melt into the earth beneath it. Be mindful to ensure your jaw, throat and skin between your eyebrows is soft and relaxed throughout. Neck long. You may like to pillow your head here. Intend for there to be space between each rib as they open outwards and let yourself be completely absorbed by the posture for **2-minutes**. To end, glide your hands to the outer edges of your thighs and softly close your legs back together.

REST. Hug your knees into the belly, draw a couple of circles here with your knees, ironing out anything you're ready to release. Give yourself what you need in this moment to prepare for a rejuvenating sleep. Maybe do a few ankle circles here. Let this soft movement sooth you for **1-minute**.

OTHER WAYS: If you cannot take your torso all the way back to the floor, place a cushion or two, a folded blanket, or a bolster if you have one, under your back to support you in relaxing fully into the pose. Make it as comfy as you need it to be to allow for a complete surrender. You can also place some cushions under each knee of extra support - make your practice feel nurturing for where you're at today.

GIFTS: **Goddess Pose** is said to be the Queen of all yoga poses for women and is a really nice restorative posture to do before you go to sleep. It helps open up the hips and stretch out the groin - also giving the thighs and knees a delicious stretch - so your energy doesn't get stuck in your pelvic region, while at the same time helping us to feel more open emotionally.

Reclining back in this yummy pose helps expand the lumbar curvature of the spine, while lengthening the layers of the abdominal wall, helping maintain pelvic organ support. Given many women's reproductive and digestive problems stem from abdominal tension, this is a beautiful pose to softly relax the belly and keep the abdominal organs healthy.

Happy Baby

On your back, knees drawn into your chest, let your knees open out to the sides so your legs and feet are still in the air. You can stay here for an easier pose, or you can take your hands to the outer edges of your feet, and press your feet up into your hands, while at the same time, pressing your shoulders down into the earth for a nice stretch. You're working to get your feet to touch the sky, so you might walk among the clouds!

Lengthen your tailbone towards the lower edge of your mat, and tuck your chin into the chest to find length all the way up your spine. You want to imagine that you can feel your entire spine from the tailbone all the way to the base of the head connected to your yoga mat. If you find your hips are tight, you can press one leg up into the sky at a time.



The other option here, is to take your big toes in your hands and press your feet up to the sky using this grip, as this will help activate the pituitary gland as we did in the **Life Nerve Stretch**. You can keep pressing your feet up, aiming to stack your ankles above your knees, finding a nice amount of opposition as you draw your shoulders down. Or you may like to have little rock from side to side here or perhaps massage your feet.

As you get cosy in this pose, having a little **Happy Baby** play, breathe deep into your hips as you explore for **2-minutes**. To come out of the pose, with control, use an exhale to release, gently lowering the soles of your feet to the earth, so you come into **Base Position**.

OTHER WAYS: There are many options for this pose. For a much easier option, you can simply rest with your legs out to the sides, or you can add a **Prayer Pose** (as you can see in the first image) to help stretch out your hips and groin. You can hold the inside arches of your feet for a little stirrup posture, or the outer edges as I described.

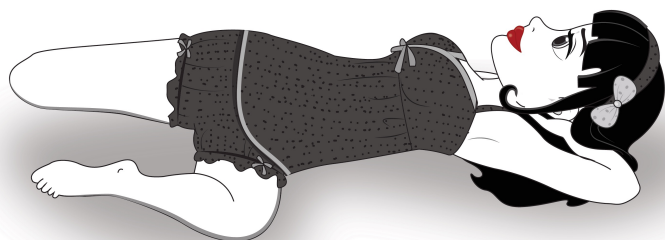
If you can't hold your feet with your hands - or you find doing this pulls your head off the ground, creates tension in the neck area or causes your chest to close - either grab your ankles or shins, or use a yoga strap or a scarf looped over the sole of each foot to create some nice resistance there. Have a play and use whichever option/s bring joy for you.

GIFTS: **Happy Baby** pose stretches the inner groin and lower back while calming the mind and relieving the stresses of the day so you can enjoy a restful night's sleep. It's believed this pose helps shape and control the mind, calming us when we are flooded with thoughts. **Happy Baby** also helps lengthen and realign the spine, as well as strengthening the arms and shoulders and opening and

stretching the hips and groin. This is also a really great pose to practise if you want to train your body to be able to sit easily in a **Squat**.

Windshield Wiper Leg Stretch

Lying in **Base Position**, interlace your fingers behind your head, so you create a nice little hammock for your lovely head. Take your feet out as wide as your yoga mat and on an exhale let your knees melt over to the left side of the mat. You can rest here or let your right knee reach for the lower left-hand corner of your mat for a little extra stretch. Inhale down into your belly, exhale and chill, breathing into the stretch for **30-seconds**.



Inhale your legs back to centre, exhaling them down to the other side, noticing the inner sensations of that lovely rotation, and once again surrender here into the stretch, taking it a little deeper if you like, by inviting your left knee to draw towards the lower right-hand corner of your mat, breathing deep here for a further **30-seconds**.

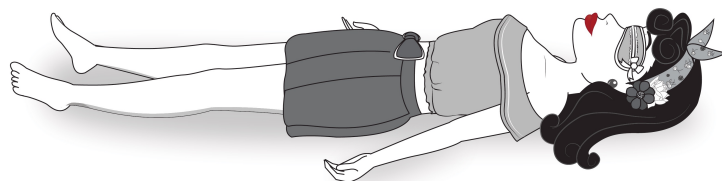
Inhaling back to centre, release your hands to your sides and begin to slowly **Windshield Wiper** your knees back and forth, each time moving the toes a little further down the mat. Winding down for the day, releasing tension in your glutes, until your legs extend right out long. **Windshield Wiper** your toes, side-to-side a few times, then let your body open out into a beautiful **Sleeping Beauty Pose**.

GIFTS: This pose feels so yummy and really is one of my favourite stretches! When you **Windshield Wiper** your legs in this way you're releasing tension in your gluteal muscles, groin, hips and psoas. You're helping iron out tension from the tissue around the ovaries, and given it's said that women store much of their stress in their ovaries, this is a really nice one to do before bed to help alleviate the stress of the day. Overall, **Windshield Wiper Leg Stretch** is such a calming stretch and is great for flexibility as well.

Relaxation in Sleeping Beauty Pose

Come into the full **Sleeping Beauty Pose**, legs stretching out, toes falling away from each other. Send your arms out, palms up. You may like to place a small folded blanket under your head. Use a pillow under your knees if you want extra support, close your eyes and relax. Spend the next **90-seconds** simply listening to the sound of your breath, letting it take you into a calm space, so you're ready to drift off to sleep on you finish this Bedtime Practice.

OTHER WAYS: If you need more support than a cushion under your knees to relieve lower back tension, rest the calves of your legs on a chair. If **Sleeping Beauty** simply doesn't work for you, **Base Position**, **Child's Pose** or **Easy Pose** are all options for you **Relaxation**. You may even like to head straight to be, and let your **Relaxation** take you into sleep!



GIFTS: Relaxing after this sequence is the final moment where your body is given the chance to assimilate all the calming effects of the practice, so that you might drift off into a beautiful slumber. We've spent the whole sequence winding down, doing poses that will help stimulate the parts of the brain that create calm within the body, so now you can simply enjoy and let this **Relaxation** serve you.

